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Pelham NEWS

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COUNCIL

'Smoke police are bordering on harassment'

WAYNE CAMPBELL
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — A smoke-free outdoor bylaw has drawn fire from some town councillors.

Pelham received a resolution from the Town of Fort Erie about a Niagara Region call to municipalities. It asks them to pass bylaws designating outdoor public spaces as smoke-free.

Ward 3 Coun. John Durley reacted to the idea of bans under the region's Smoke-Free Outdoor Spaces initiatives.

see **COUNCIL** | page 2

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FENWICK SANTA CLAUS PARADE: All sorts of characters on hand for festivities

JOE CSEH PelhamNEWS Photo

Popeye the Good News Man, aka Deene Kornechuk, 82, from St. Ann's, strikes a very familiar pose to old-time cartoon aficionados riding on the Transport for Christ float in Saturday's Fenwick Santa Claus Parade. See Page 3 for more parade photos.

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upfront

■ COUNCIL

Pelham says region has right to ban

FROM PAGE 1

"We're getting awful close to Big Brother here," he said.

Durley, who is a non-smoker, said he's never had a complaint from anyone about people smoking outside.

"It seems the smoke police are bordering on harassment," he said. "I have a bad feeling about this."

Ward 1 Coun. Richard Rybiak, who called himself a former smoker who remembers the difficulty of quitting, said he supported the resolution.

"We should have the right to breathe air that is not contaminated."

The Fort Erie resolution supported the region's initiatives, but not the cost of enforcing a town bylaw to back it up.

It said regional council should pass a regional bylaw prohibiting smoking in outdoor public spaces across the region "and enforce the same."

Pelham council supported the Fort Erie resolution with Durley and King voting against it.

Niagara Falls, Welland and Grimsby have passed bylaws limiting or banning smoking in outdoor public settings.

Pelham council has not discussed an outdoor smoking bylaw.

■ **BAD KIDS:** 'After-party' for students gets out of control; $50,000 damage done to 22 of Niagara Falls hotel's 35 rooms, owner says

Teens trash hotel rooms

BRETT CLARKSON
QMI Agency

NIAGARA FALLS — A group of area high school students rampaged through a Lundy's Lane motel after a Friday night dance, trashing 22 rooms and leaving a trail of destruction that left some rooms looking as if a bomb had hit them.

The sheer amount of damage — gaping holes in the drywall, doors shredded to pieces, sinks ripped from the walls — has Avenue Inn owner David Linqi Liu considering legal action against the motel guests while motel manager Robert Forget is wondering why police apparently did little to stop the carnage.

For their part, police said the matter is a civil issue, not a criminal one.

The trouble began Friday at about 8 p.m., soon after students from Notre Dame College School started showing up at their rooms, said Forget, who was working at the motel through the night as the rooms were turned upside down.

The Grade 12 students had booked 35 rooms at the motel — about four to each room — so they'd have a place to party after their school's semiformal dance at the Americana resort on Lundy's Lane.

Forget said he was told around 8 p.m. by a student that Room 135 was being "demolished," he said.

"By the time I got to the room, it was completely destroyed," he said, adding he locked the room and started going door-to-door to see if there were more problems.

At 9 p.m., Forget said he started kicking kids off the property, dispatching about 30 students from the motel property.

But the damage didn't stop there.

"We tried to help them out to have a little fun, and they repay us by destroying our rooms," Forget said, adding the remaining kids were destroying rooms until about 5 a.m.

Forget also said a Niagara Regional Police cruiser drove through the Avenue Inn's parking lot several times during the night.

He said that when he told police of the escalating situation, they told him there was little they could do because it was a civil issue, not a criminal one, and that it was the motel's responsibility to deal with their guests.

"They said it was our problem," Forget said.

NRP Staff Sgt. Michael Woods said police treat situations like the Avenue Inn debacle as a civil matter between two parties involved in a contract.

"When you rent a house to that person, and that person causes damage to it, then the resultant trying to get your money back is done as a civil process, whether it's through a landlord tenant board or if it's done through small claims court," Woods said. "It's a similar situation."

Woods also called on the motel owners to be more careful about who they rent to.

On Monday, Forget, Liu, and his son Harry Liu showed a reporter and photographer the extent of the damage, leading the way from room to room.

While some rooms suffered varying levels of moderate to extensive damage, other rooms were scenes of complete carnage. It was clear that whoever was behind the vandalism had their work cut out for them.

There were large holes in the drywall that enabled clear view from the bedroom — through the wall — into the bathroom. In one bathroom, the ceiling tiles along with the ductwork had been pulled down so that they rested on the toilet. Outside the bathroom, the pieces of dozens of broken beer and liquor bottles littered the floor.

In other rooms, discarded condoms had been left on the floor, a short distance away from a stove that had had its glass door smashed. Beer-drenched TVs lay on the floor, near ripped wall paintings. A Holy Bible had even been torn up.

The Lius said they have all the names of all the students who stayed in the rooms and that they'll be trying to make contact with them. Liu added that the financial toll was probably somewhere between $50,000 and $100,000.

MIKE DIBATTISTA QMI Agency

Twenty-two of 35 motel rooms rented to Welland high school students attending a semi-formal dance Friday were severely damaged. Avenue Inn owner Harry Liu looks over some of the damage.

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tempo

■ CHRISTMAS PARADE

Santa comes to Fenwick

On Saturday, Fenwick held its annual Santa Claus Parade. Santa and a large cast of supporters turned out to bring some Christmas joy to residents of Pelham.

PelhamNEWS Photos by Joe Cseh.

Santa and Mrs. Claus wave to the crowd.

St. Catharines Twinning Association members brought the steel drum sounds of the Caribbean to Fenwick on Saturday.

E.L. Crossley Secondary School Band.

Miniature horses Charlie and Raddie pull J.K. Ranch's entry in the Fenwick Santa Claus Parade. Who says reindeer do all the work?

Pelham and Area Girl Guides welcomed Santa by marching in his parade.

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comment

■perspective

Those who tweet to thwart police are twits

One needs only to scan the headlines to realize a simple truth — some people are just plain stupid.

That's not stupid in a didn't-pay-enough-attention-in-school kind of way, or a single-digit-IQ kind of way.

Some people are stupid in the kind of way that puts others' lives at risk.

For all of the great applications of social media — for example, Twitter and Facebook can be used to notify massive audiences across vast geographic areas of missing persons — the aforementioned stupid people are using social media to notify and warn their followers and friends about the location of RIDE programs.

Can anyone be more stupid? Really?

Between 2003 and 2005, alcohol use by drivers was a factor in almost 30% of all vehicle accidents in Canada.

MADD estimates that translates into more than 1,200 deaths as a result of impaired driving.

Yet there are people who want to warn their drinking-and-driving buddies that the police have set up RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere, for the stupid among us) programs.

It's really no surprise that more than 30% of drinking drivers involved in fatal crashes are aged 16 to 24. Sometimes youths are stupid.

There likely isn't a single reader who hasn't been impacted by drinking and driving. It is unconscionable to think there are those who would not only condone drinking and driving, but also try to protect the guilty.

see **PERSPECTIVE** | page 5

Town and region budgets approved

Dave Augustyn
MAYORAL VIEW

Both Pelham council and regional council have adopted early budgets for 2012.

You will recall that a capital budget acquires, builds, or rehabilitates major infrastructure or equipment with a long life. Such capital assets include municipal facilities and buildings, trucks and vehicles, roads and bridges and sidewalks, and water/sewage pipes and plants.

The operating budget controls "day-to-day" expenditures such as salaries, wages, benefits, heat, hydro, and routine maintenance of buildings and infrastructure.

Rates budgets fund special services like water, waste water, and waste management. Not everyone across Pelham or the Region receives these services, and provincial rules demand separate water and waste water budgets.

On Thursday, Dec. 1, regional council adopted your entire regional budget for 2012 — including the Capital, Operating, and Rate budgets. Not only does this +$750 million budget include the work of departments like Public Works, Public Health, Community Services, Integrated Community Planning and Corporate Services, it also includes budgets for outside agencies like Niagara Regional Housing, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Niagara Economic Development, and Niagara Regional Police Service.

This is the earliest in recent memory for the operating, rates and agency portion of the Region's budget. I am especially pleased with this, not only because it means we can start issuing capital project tenders and concentrate on finding efficiencies, but also because I had the honour of chairing the Region's budget for 2012.

Then, on Monday, Dec. 5, Pelham council adopted your 2012 Pelham capital budget. Pelham's capital budget will continue to improve the community:

- Regional Road #20: work together with Region on the reconstruction from Rice Road to Station Street — including new sidewalk (north side), street lighting, and water/waste water improvements;
- Downtown Fonthill: "fine tune" and complete streetscaping;
- Downtown Fenwick: complete redesign plans, review structural integrity of historic flagpole, and earmark revitalization funds in future years;
- Investments in Recreation & Culture: including replacing Harold Black Park Soccer shelters, installing new bleachers and develop detailed design for Phase 2 and 3 of master plan for Centennial Park, and develop a Cultural Master Plan;

see **AUGUSTYN** | page 5

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■readers' views

Hudak wrong on apprenticeships

The heart of apprenticeship training is the quality of instruction in the workplace. The guidance of experienced, skilled workers is crucial to the success of any apprentice.

Ontario PC Leader Tim Hudak has been misleading Ontarians by stating regulatory changes can be made by the Ministry of Labour in regards to the apprenticeship system — which is not true.

Ratios are specific to 34 individual skilled trades, all in construction, such as electrician and plumbing. In the past, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities had the responsibility to inspect workplaces to ensure apprentices were getting the quality training that industry required, and that included ratio requirements.

We created the Ontario College of Trades to give industry — employers, workers and apprentices — greater responsibility for reviewing training ratios. The college will conduct these reviews in a more open manner, beginning this coming January. Results of each review and the reasons behind each decision will be posted on the college's webpage, for all to see.

Ron Johnson, chair of College of Trades and the former Conservative MPP for Brant, agrees that Mr. Hudak "is completely wrong on this issue … it seems he's arguing in favour of a move to big government."

If ratios were the barrier Mr. Hudak says they are, how could there be more than 120,000 apprentices learning a trade today — which is nearly 60,000 more than when Mr. Hudak was in cabinet?

Mr. Hudak has made empty promises to create 200,000 apprenticeships. It's time for him to back up his numbers.

Glen Murray
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities

Municipalities not using power

Bad news travels fast, and myths often travel faster. The article Fight ongoing for control over green energy projects appears to have fallen prey to two myths. The first myth is that local democracy has been undermined leaving municipalities with no power regarding green energy projects. The second, the Planning Act with its patchwork of standards, burdensome processes for under-resourced municipalities and endless red tape is a preferable option.

These are myths because municipalities under the Green Energy and Economy Act (GEEA) have significant powers. In fact with only 1MW of wind constructed since the GEEA was passed, it should be recognized that large wind developments now in operation were developed under the old Planning Act. The truth is the provincewide Renewable Energy Approvals process under the Environmental Protection Act is open and transparent with a clear role for municipalities. Arguably this new process is more rigorous and cohesive than the red tape heavy patchwork process of the past.

Municipalities have powers of which they are either uncertain of, or choosing not to use. Concerned citizens need to ask their local politicians why not? Hopefully it is not because it is more convenient for local governments to point at the province than make an unpopular decision at home.

Kristopher Stevens, Executive Director
Ontario Sustainable Energy Association

■ AUGUSTYN

2012 budget has the revitalization of Pelham in mind

FROM PAGE 4

• Concession and kitchen improvements to the arena;

• Continue renovations and renewal of historic Old Pelham Town Hall;

• Fire Service enhancements: start two-year process of replacing all SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus), and also begin schedule of replacing bunker gear;

• Retrofit and improve Cherry Ridge Subdivision Storm Water Management Pond;

• Finally, develop a Master Plan for the Town's 32 acres at Rice Road and RR#20.

Your 2012 budgets will continue our Town's revitalization and our Region's service and enhancements.

You may contact Mayor Dave Augustyn at mayordave@pelham.ca or read past columns at www.pelhammayordave.blogspot.com

■ PERSPECTIVE

Using technology to aid drunk drivers is just stupid

FROM PAGE 4

Drinking and driving is a crime, and any form of assistance — whether it is posting the location of RIDE programs or otherwise — should make the offender guilty of being an accomplice.

Drinking and driving was a problem long before social media came along, but that doesn't mean people should use the benefits of social utilities to perpetuate the problem.

Technology should be employed to make it harder for people to drink and drive and get away with it — not easier.

Anything less would just be, well, stupid.

— John Chambers

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■ POLITICS

Hudak would shake up apprenticeship system

JEFF BOLICHOWSKI
QMI Agency

ST. CATHARINES — For every veteran trades worker, Ontario should have an apprentice to match, says the province's top Tory.

Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak stopped in St. Catharines Thursday, Dec. 8 to push the governing Liberals to change the province's apprenticeship system. Hudak, who spoke at the Niagara Welding Academy, said he's looking to go to a one-to-one ratio of veterans to apprentices, a move he figures could create 200,000 jobs.

In an interview, Hudak said the pitch, initially part of his election platform, targets both high unemployment and a shortage of skilled trades workers.

"We're training people, but they can't get jobs and they're moving out west," said the MPP for Niagara West-Glanbrook.

At the moment, he said, the province requires workplaces to have three to five journeyman workers for every apprentice. "When you have those kinds of ratios, three, four, five, that means you only have one third of the job positions available."

Hudak

The Tories said in a news release the province has lost 44,000 full-time jobs since the election.

Hudak said Ontario lags behind other provinces in terms of how many people it graduates into trades. He said he's looking to get colleges more involved in apprenticeships.

He said changing the apprenticeship system is a regulatory change, not a legislative one, and would need an OK from Labour Minister Linda Jeffrey.

Asked why he's bringing the topic up so soon after the election, Hudak said, "I found wherever I talked about it ... I just found it resonated."

He praised the welding school for its work with apprenticeships.

"Let's do more of it across the province. Let's get rid of some of this outdated red tape."

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■ **CRIME:** Do you know this man?

Robber hits Fenwick RBC

PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — Police are still looking for a bank robber who struck at the Fenwick's RBC bank branch on Tuesday, Dec. 6.

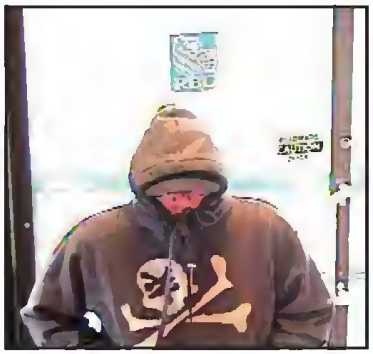
At about 10:16 a.m. a man entered the bank at 795 Canboro Rd., approached a female bank teller and demanded money. The teller produced an undisclosed amount of money to the man, who exited the bank and ran off westbound on Canboro Rd. towards Church St.

No weapon was used during the robbery. No injuries were reported.

The suspect is described to a white male in his 20s between 5-foot-11 and 6-foot with a slim build. He was wearing a front-zipped grey hooded sweatshirt with a white skull and crossbones on the front, a black baseball cap, mirrored aviator-styled sunglasses and grey jeans.

Niagara Regional Police are appealing to assistance in the case. Anyone with information is asked to contact investigating officer Det. Sgt. Debbie Smart at 906-735-7811, ext. 3342 or anonymously through Crime Stoppers of Niagara.

To leave a tip with Crime Stoppers call 1-800-222-8477, online at www.niagaratips.com or text 274637 with the keyword "Niagara" followed by the tip.



Niagara Regional Police released this image captured on bank security cameras of the person who robbed the RBC in Fenwick Tuesday.

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Dec 26	Dec 23 at 10 a.m.	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 27	Dec 23 at 10 a.m.	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 28	Dec 27 at 1 p.m.	Dec 22 at 1 p.m.
Dec 29	Dec 28 at 1 p.m.	Dec 27 at 1 p.m.
Dec 30	Dec 29 at 1 p.m.	Dec 28 at 1 p.m.
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PELHAM NEWS & INPORT - word and display

Publication Date	Deadline
Dec 23	Dec 16 at 10 a.m.
Dec 30	Dec 23 at 10 a.m.

CELEBRATIONS PAGE

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■ MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Pelham's capital budget passes

WAYNE CAMPBELL
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — Town council has formally approved the municipality's $6.1-million capital budget, with only minor modifications made Monday to the spending plan presented earlier this month.

Councillors put back an item to repair a soccer players shelter seating area in Harold Black Park.

Acting chief administrative officer Craig Larmour in a report to council pointed out the covered bench was put up to protect soccer players from stray baseballs.

The soccer pitch is beside a baseball field.

Mayor Dave Augustyn told council that Niagara regional council last week had included a reconstruction of Regional Rd. 20 between Rice Rd. and Station St. in its 2012 capital budget.

So, he said, improvements to the stretch of road — such as sidewalks, sewers and watermains — earlier put into the 2012 Pelham budget will go ahead as planned next year.

With the approval of the capital budget, town staff can start preparing calls for construction tenders.

In the past few years, by opening the bidding early, Pelham has attracted bids below its budgeted amount. That has resulted in surpluses at the end of the year.

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■ councilroundup

SPEED HUMPS WANTED

PELHAM — The town has received two letters reuesting speed humps on Haist St. N. and Pancake Lane.

Geoff Howe submitted an 18-name petition from Haist St. residents asking for one along a section of Haist north of Regional Rd. 20 to reduce excessive speeding. "The residents are frustrated over this issue," he said in his letter presented to town councillors this week.

He pointed out the hilly street is on the Niagara Regional Cycling Tour Map Guide and used for cycling fundraising events.

Ward 2 Coun. Catherine King said she has had discussions with Howe over speeding along the road.

Similarly, Phil Oates, who has lived on Pancake Lane for 20 years, said he has seen many cars travelling well over the speed limit up and down Pancake Lane between Haist and Effingham Sts. Last summer, he presented a 130-name petition asking for a stop sign at Pancake Lane and Cherry Ave. The town said it was unnecessary.

Now he is asking for a speed hump at the spot where the Steve Bauer Trail crosses at that corner.

"There is an increased concern over the number of speeding vehicles as there are no sidewalks past Blackcreek Cres., which is one street over from Cherry Ave.," he said in his letter.

Ward 3 Coun. John Durley said four speed humps on the southern section of Haist have shown they are effective at reducing speed. Council asked its staff "to investigate and report" about the speed hump requests.

LOO LOGOS LACKING

PELHAM — Bea Clark of the Pelham Active Transportation Committee has sent a letter to town council about need to remove rumble strips on Canboro Rd. and point people to public washrooms.

They are two outstanding items on the committee's top-10 list for improved walking, cycling and other such transportation in town. Rumble strips are considered dangerous for cyclists, pedestrians with strollers and those who must use scooters, she said in the letter. The committee suggests removing them.

The committee also suggests signs to guide people to public washrooms in the town such as at libraries, town hall and the arena. Ward 1 Coun. Richard Rybiak said the rumble strip issue may be a matter of competing safety interests. They are there to alert drivers who may be leaving the roadway. Council asked staff for a report.

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■ **CONTRACT:** Lone bidder awarded $37,600 deal

Pelham sticks with Shorthills for tree maintenance

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WAYNE CAMPBELL
PelhamNEWS Staff

PELHAM — Shorthills Tree Service has been awarded a $37,600 tree maintenance contract with the Town of Pelham.

The lone contract bidder has held the annual contract in 2008, 2009 and 2010, said Alan Mannell, acting director of community and infrastructure services.

While the bid is well below a budgeted amount of $65,000, Mannell cautioned councillors against expecting a windfall.

"The town's annual program is based on historical tree maintenance data to determine a theoretical number of trees which may require maintenance during the service agreement period," he said in a report. "Understanding that there are many factors, primarily weather and internal condition of the trees, that determine the amount of maintenance required in any given year, the program may cost more or less than the tendered price."

Mannell said service contracts such as these tend to draw few bids because they are done on an on-call basis. The town maintains trees on within road allowances and on public spaces.

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■ EMPLOYMENT

Region gives hiring freeze the pink slip

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THOROLD — Niagara Region is once again hanging its Help Wanted sign.

Regional council voted 19-8 to scrap a staff hiring freeze they voted in over the summer. The program had spared the region 10 jobs, saving $50,000 and avoiding $68,000 more in costs, but councillors argued it was time to quit micromanaging job by job.

"It's wrong for us to just jump in and pretend we're the managers," said Lincoln Mayor Bill Hodgson.

"I really think the experiment has shown itself for what it is, and that is a drain on resources."

A report said staff has spent 441 hours managing the freeze between July 29 and Oct. 6, at a cost of about $24,000.

The freeze saw business cases required for all new hires, and those cases vetted by staff and approved through council's corporate services committee. While 10 jobs were not filled, 81 others were filled again.

Dropping the freeze irked St. Catharines Coun. Brian Heit, who initially pitched the freeze in July. He said the point of the freeze was to make staff consider and approve every position.

"Staff are being paid to do a job," he said. "One of their jobs should be reviewing all the jobs. If we want to be sustainable, we've got to start somewhere."

Six of the dropped jobs were in the public health department, with four more in public works.

But the report to council's corporate services committee in late November noted the freeze has hurt both departments. Both, it noted, were struggling to deliver services.

The health department in particular, the report said, was having trouble with child health and vaccine and preventable disease responsibilities under the terms of the hiring freeze.

> **"Staff are being paid to do a job. One of their jobs should be reviewing all the jobs. If we want to be sustainable, we've got to start somewhere."**
>
> *St. Catharines Coun. Brian Heit*

And with winter snow expected soon, cold-weather operations were also singled out as a problem spot.

The motions were brought to the floor in a double-whammy, beginning with West Lincoln Mayor Doug Joyner's bid to reconsider the original vote. That earned its necessary two-third majority.

The motion to kill the freeze entirely was brought by Niagara Falls Coun. Barbara Greenwood, who said it has been ineffective and a drain on staff time.

"Stop micromanaging," she urged. "We have great staff. We hired them to do a job. Let's get on with the job."

Thorold Coun. Henry D'Angela noted positions were still being filled, hiring freeze aside, including one in public health recently.

He slammed the term 'hiring freeze' and said that phrase is "misleading and feel-good words for the public."

He said the freeze tied managers' hands by putting new hires at the mercy of council's committee and meeting cycle.

"Gone are the misleading and feel-good words," he said. "We're replacing it with reality."

Niagara Falls Coun. Selina Volpatti said, "The hiring freeze was definitely a feel-good motion and I feel good about saving taxpayers $100,000."

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He was awarded a certificate of merit by The Mitchener Foundation for his efforts to legalize heroin to ease the suffering of terminal cancer patients. His Gifford-Jones Foundation donated $500,000 to establish The Gifford Jones Professorship in Pain Control and Palliative Care at The University of Toronto Medical School. During his career he has travelled extensively to interview a number of internationally renowned scientists and researchers.

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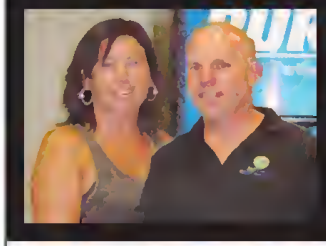

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